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ABSTRACT

This essay argues that the development of leadership skills in the education of college students should be on the agenda of all faculty and describes ways to build the development of leadership skills into virtually any course or program of study through a technique called Reflective Controversy. An opening phase of the essay describes the signs in society at large that leadership is needed and argues that leadership will, in future, be required or expected of all college graduates. A following section explores leadership itself looking at different types of leadership and at recent research on leadership. Another section discusses how leadership skills are imparted and argues that they can be taught in the context of college courses. There follow suggestions as to how practice of these skills can be integrated into curricula by approaches such as "Reflective Controversy," an instructional approach that requires student cooperation and collaboration in task achievement and that can be used in nearly all academic disciplines. The paper goes on to describe this instructional technique in more detail including group size, materials needed, time required, advanced preparation, and the steps involved. Twenty-two references are included. (JB)

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LEADERSHIP EDUCATION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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LEADERSHIP EDUCATION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

by

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Introduction

Most of us in the academy like to think we are preparing our students to be leaders. Are we really doing much about it? We desire our graduates to be worthy contributors to their communities, families, society; to their career or profession; and to their own self-development. We would like them to positively influence others, in short, to lead. In this essay I want to convey the ideas that the development of leadership skills in the education of college students should be on the agenda of all faculty, and that there are some ways to build leader skills development into virtually any course or program of study.

The benefits of this effort are many. Students learn to take initiative and some risks; society-in-general benefits from more capable members; and, faculty are engaged in a socially-responsive extension of their disciplinary repertoire.

When one examines the reported crises and shortcomings in health care systems, education, business management, and government, it is not difficult to conclude that leadership is sorely needed . Daily headlines and stories in the nation's newspapers herald the need for leadership. Peter Vaill, author of Managing as a Performing Art (1989), has characterized the fast moving, complex, and turbulent operating environments of today's organizations as "permanent white

water." Are we assisting our students to be effective and competent leaders? Positively responding to this question is the focus of this essay.

In today's business, service, and nonprofit organizations greater worker participation as well as more attention to and vigilance in work responsibilities are needed. This is because there is increasing competition among firms and an attendant emphasis on service, responsiveness, and information. As Marshall and Tucker (1992) point out in their book, Thinking for a Living, the competitive requirements for quality, service, and speed are such that workers engaged in all segments of an enterprise are going to have to think and act for themselves.

There is a need for firms to do a better job of creating opportunities to stimulate worker involvement. Some responses are: flattening and decentralizing organizations, shifting to an emphasis on self-managed teams, developing autonomous work groups, and facilitating efforts to encourage and reward productivity with profit/gain sharing, skill-based pay, and unit performance bonuses. Participation of all employees is needed for organizations and their members to be successful.

There is the problem, however, that for the majority of U.S industrial firms, the pace of improvement for processes and technologies has far exceeded that of management practice (Benson 1992). Organizations must begin to cultivate the characteristics of leadership within managerial ranks and within the workforce itself.

This is supported by a recent study by Harper entitled, "The Challenges Facing CEO's: Past, Present and Future" (1992). Chief executives of 171 diverse firms in the United States identified the greatest changes in managing a corporation in the last few years. The most mentioned of all the changes was the need for more participative management. The fourth most mentioned change was the need for leadership and the building of morale. Furthermore, the executives reported that the greatest challenge facing them was making sure that the human side of the enterprise works at all levels, that is, it has enough people with the right training, attitude, and motivation to provide customers with consistently high quality products and services. Leadership is going to be in demand not only in our traditional production and service organizations such as consumer goods and health care services, but also in new, emerging businesses such as waste minimization and applied molecular biology.

For the past sixty years, the study of leadership has been an important and central part of the popular and professional literature on management. There have been several thousand articles and books published on the subject of leadership. At the current time, we find an increased popularity of leadership. Booksellers display many new titles on leadership, most of which focus on the visionary and transformational varieties of leadership.

The subject of leadership is certainly interdisciplinary in nature. It is a component of the disciplines of psychology, political science, public administration, health care administration, sociology, recreation & sport, and educational administration, all of whose

professional journals contain articles on the subject. Leadership as a subject of study certainly has a home in the university.

All of Them Leaders?

Leadership is not behavior that is expected only of students preparing for certain careers, such as business, law, or public administration. Leadership, in one form or another, is going to be required of nearly all of our graduates, regardless of program, major, or degree. Sooner than later, most individuals will be supervising others, making decisions with and for others, instructing others, transmitting an organization's vision and values to others, and appraising the performance of others. These are very important activities in most settings. We should be helping our students learn to do these kinds of activities. We could sit back and claim that leader skills should be part of one's advanced education; or, that leadership education is something employers of our graduates can require and provide at the employer's expense. However, these claims do little to address existing problems. It may be extremely helpful if we can infuse leader education and training across the curriculum.

What is Leadership?

It is not easy to define leadership. A definition depends on the particular perspective of the one who is examining the concept. Leadership has been defined in terms of follower perceptions, interaction patterns, individual traits, role relationships, leader behavior, and influence on the culture of an organization. As Yukl (1989) suggests in his article, "Managerial Leadership," an influence

process may be the single, common element among the many definitions. Differences between researchers in their conception of leadership lead to differences in choices of phenomena to investigate and in interpretations of results. The words, leader and manager, are used interchangably in this essay. It is often difficult to segregate the roles of leaders and managers in complex organizations. Managing is often expressed as activities aimed at finding means to achieve ends. Leading is often expressed as activities that help people to establish purposes, mission, or vision as well as strategy for attaining these ends.

To be perceived as a good leader may be difficult to achieve. For example, in a recent survey of the readers of Industry Week, a magazine for managers/supervisors in industry, Verespej (1992) found that only 39 per cent rate their bosses as a good leader and less than 40 per cent rate their boss high in either managerial or people management skills. Peter Vaill, in his 1992 article, "Notes on Running an Organization," says that leading or managing in an organization is something, " ... that can be mentally, physically, and indeed spiritually exhausting. We are talking about a life full of contingencies, recalcitrant people, and unpleasant surprises." Max DePree, former head of Herman Miller Furniture and author of the popular book, Leadership is an Art (1989), believes that the signs of outstanding leadership appear primarily among the followers. He would have us ask, Are followers reaching their potential? Are they learning? Can they manage conflict? Do they change, gracefully? These different views help to illuminate the complexity of the concept of leadership.

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In order to have a more complete understanding of the concept it is important to learn of the several approaches used to define and explain leadership. At least five, major approaches have been used to examine the concept in this century. They are: traits of leaders, behavior of leaders, use of power and influence, situational leadership,and charismatic/transformational leadership. Each of these approaches deserves some attention here. Feyerherm and Mohrman in thier article, "Creating Meaning in Diversity: Leadership in New Product Development Teams," (1992) suggest that the first four approaches are grounded in mainstream leadership studies that typically embrace an objectivist perspective that asserts there is an objective reality to be observed and measured. Hence, leadership may be understood as a relationship among traits, behavior, roles, and situations which produce tangible outcomes.

Charismatic/transformational leadership is strongly related to an interpretivist perspective and focuses on leaders as managers of meaning and as sensemakers. Some features of each of the approaches follows.

> Traits of Leaders: The basis of this approach is the search for personal attributes that characterize leaders. Personality traits and general intelligence have been widely studied over the years, however, no specific set of traits has been identified that clearly indicates leader success. Most leader roles have some dependence on technical, conceptual, and interpersonal skills (Bass 1981).
>
> Behavior of Leaders: This approach examines what managers or leaders actually do on the job. Further, it examines the relationship of the behavior to performance outcomes. There is a very large body of research on leader behavior. Much of this research focuses on the nature and quality of the tasks of leading and on which behaviors have a correspondence with effectiveness. Some generalizations, albeit cautious ones, resulting from the research are that the following behaviors often result in desired performance outcomes: task structuring/direction, clarifying roles and

objectives, encouraging participation and power sharing, use of recognition and appropriate rewards, problem-solving, and setting challenging but realistic goals (Yukl 1989).

Use of Power and Influence: Power as influence has received much attention with primary focus on leader effectiveness related to amount of power held, types of power, and use of power. In general, it seems that effective leaders make use of a variety of different sources of power (for example - positional, or their formal job assignment and corresponding authority; personal, or attributes relating solely to them as individuals; and, information-based power, or that which is related to what they know, information they may control, and the like) to carry out their agendas. At the same time, power is not used to abuse others, rather it is used to obtain compliance of others and commitment to purpose.

Situational Leadership: There are approximately a dozen approaches or theories of situational leadership. These include Leader Substitutes Theory, Path-Goal Theory, Normative Decision Theory, Fiedler's Contingency Theory, Leader-Member Exchange Theory, and others. The emphasis of the approaches is on the context within which the leader behavior occurs. Context includes factors such as the nature of the tasks to be performed in the organization or, the authority and influence of the leader, the characteristics of the followers or subordinates, and the nature of the relationships of the leader and the followers. The various approaches attempt to explain how the contextual or situational features influence leader effectiveness. In essence, the situation may often be a determinant of leader effectiveness.

Transformational and Charismatic Leadership: Today, these approaches occupy center stage in the examination of leadership. In an age of economic turbulence, global interdependence, rapid change, information overload, and the like, many of our organizations and institutions need uncommon leaders. By way of providing an interpretive scheme or "new world" view for followers or by helping to create success in a crisis situation, a person is identified as being charismatic. This attribution may result in unquestioning acceptance of the leader, emulation of the leader, affection for the leader and the like (Hunt et al. 1988). Transformational leadership is defined by Yukl (page 269, 1989) as:

> ". . . the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organization members and building commitment for the organization's mission, objectives, and strategies. The concept describes a leadership process that is recognized primarily by outcomes such as major changes in the culture and strategies of an

> organization or social system. Transformational leadership involves influence by a leader on subordinates, but the effect of the influence is to empower subordinates to participate in the transformation of the organization."

> Much of the research on charismatic and transformational leadership is of a qualitative, descriptive, or anecdotal nature. The other major approaches identified benefit from much empirical research as well as qualitative research.

The foregoing provides a general overview of how the concept of leadership has been examined. In sum, leadership is the ability to influence others to act toward some goal or result. In an organizational sense, leadership is intertwined with position, authority, and power. In an individual sense it is related to one's knowledge, expertise, and personality.

An individual can learn how to influence others. One may learn to assess the features of a situation and then identify a prescription for influence. Much of leading can be identified as helping others to define what is to be done and how it is to be done. Max DePree (1989) says that a leader needs to " ... abandon oneself to the strengths of others, being vulnerable to what others can do better than we can." (p. 78).

Many of the skills and abilities of leadership are learned by our students without our help. For example, they learn about influencing others through their social clubs and groups, their jobs, families, their academic/classroom contacts, their friendships and so on. Much of this training in leadership is informal, random, and unsystematic. Attempting leadership is one thing, effectively leading is another.

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Leadership Education and Training

Leadership education and training is sometimes referred to as non-cognitive in nature as contrasted the content-domain of a typical college course. If it is desirable to infuse leader education learning activities across the curriculum, a challenging task for faculty emerges. That is, faculty will need to consider ways to integrate these learning activities with the existing content of their courses. It is probably reasonable to assume that many faculty will resist the addition of new, non-cognitive activities to a course or program. Many instructors believe there is currently not sufficient time available to include all that should be included in a course of study. There is more and more to know about. The knowledge explosion is real. One need only examine textbooks copyrighted in 1983 and in 1993 for survey courses in, for example, psychology, management, or biology, to observe that such books have grown from a few dozen pages to a few hundred pages. More than anything, we want our students to be technically competent. We want them to know about our field and to embrace the knowledge, values, tools, and processes of our field. Hence, there will be competition for "air time" between existing domain-specific learning activities on the one hand and new, superimposed, leader education learning activities on the other. It is possible, however, to achieve both goals.

Do faculty share much interest or concern for leadership development in students? On many campuses faculty do not take a direct role in leadership development. Often, the division of student

affairs works directly with student groups, clubs, fraternities, and sororities in leader development programs. Many of these programs are extensive and reach many students. There is much information available about the types and successes of these programs (see the Jossey-Bass Publishers, Inc. books and series of publications on higher education and student development).

We can introduce and practice several types of leader behavior in the typical classroom setting. The behavior to be practiced and experienced would have the content of the course as its core. Instructors can create situations that offer students opportunities to use leadership skills.

Integrating Leader Education into Courses

We need to identify ways for our students to perform activities or skills that are representative of activities effective leaders do. We need to create tasks, conditions, and reinforcements that will stimulate students to behave as effective leaders. This effort parallels that of the behavioral or skills approach identified earlier in this essay.

We need to establish situations that stimulate all or nearly all of our students to practice the work that helps to direct efforts, make things happen and get things done. The situations we create do not have to be extraordinary ones. Vaill (1992) reports that most leadership takes place in the trenches, in patient, persistent, pedestrian activities.

Instruction approaches should be aimed at strengthening an individual's self-belief or confidence so the individual feels more competent, powerful, and more in control. Recent work on empowerment, self-efficacy, and self-management such as Manz and Sims 1989 book, Superleadership; Conger and Kanungo's 1987 article, "Toward a Behavioral Theory of Charismatic Leadership" ; and Sims and Lorenzi's 1992 book, The New Leadership Paradigm, suggest activities for faculty to strengthen the bonds among the factors of self-belief, performance, and reinforcements. The following questions may be asked regarding a complex task:

How well are you performing now? (self observation;stock-taking)

What specific improvements do you want to make? (goal setting)

How will you practice to achieve these improvements? (rehearsal)

Having practiced, how would you rate your performance now? (reinforcement)

These actions are high participation elements of a task setting. Manz and Sims (1989) suggest that these actions seem most appropriate when (1) tasks are unstructured, (2) individuals hold important information about the task, (3) decisions must be highly acceptable to individuals for implementation to be successful, and,(4) individuals share the broader goals of the course of study or program.

All of these suggestions help to set the stage for the practice of desirable leader behaviors. These behaviors will need to take place in the context of interpersonal relationships of groups within

the college class. Hence, the peer group is the setting for the interaction.

A review of the literature (see these sources in the Bibliography: Hales,1986; Kraut, et al., 1989; Lyons,1991; Mintzberg, 1973; Waddock, 1991) on leading, administering, and managing has revealed a group of tasks that require social interaction and that are performance-based. The tasks are universal in nature and are capable of being integrated into many collegiate classes/courses. Mastery of these tasks will not guarantee that a student will become an effective leader, however, potential leader ability should be enhanced. The tasks are representative of activities effective leaders do well and may be performed by students in small or large group settings. Further, the tasks evoke actions that nearly all leaders have in common, quite apart from their technical expertise and specific job-related competence. These tasks are:

* establish a course of action for self/others to accomplish specific goals;

* keep a task group on track;

* guide others toward goal/task achievement;

* give constructive feedback on performance;

* successfully solve unstructured problems;

* effectively present and sell ideas orally and in writing; and,

* keep group/organization members informed.

Our role as educators is to create learning situations where there is opportunity to practice most or all of these tasks, evaluate

them, and improve them. At the same time we want to do this so course-specific learning occurs. We seek the integration of leader behavior and course-specific learning.

Students do not have to be told that "leader" skills will be an important focus of the learning. Leading, as a concept, may be a bit scary for some students. Rather, students should be informed that they will be practicing their abilities to influence others and facilitate the performance of others.

Reflective Controversy is a very useful learning approach. It is intended to integrate some leader behavior and course-specific learning. Reflective Controversy (RC) is an instruction approach that requires student cooperation and collaboration in task achievement. RC also places much responsibility on students for learning and decision making. The approach includes some of the leader performance activities already identified. Reflective controversy is quite flexible as a method and may be used in a variety of courses. RC is an example of a learning approach that includes leader development tasks. Resources such as Synergogy by Blake and Mouton (1984), and Thirty-five Lesson Formats by Lyons (1992), contain other useful learning approaches.

The Means

The purposes of Reflective Controversy (adapted from Kurfiss, 1987) are to have students learn to study/research an issue, prepare collaboratively a justifiable position on an issue, and engage in a consensual process where synthesis and integration of ideas can be

achieved. Students do not need to be told there will be assessment of "leader" skills. Rather, faculty should inform them that their abilities to influence others and facilitate the performance of others will be assessed.

Size of Group - To use Reflective Controversy a minimum of 12 students is desirable. Multiples of four students are also desirable.

Materials Needed - None

Time Required - Time requirements are moderated by class size and complexity of the issues or topics. Normally, RC will require from three to five in-class hours.

Advance Preparation - The instructor will need to identify some controversial issues pursuant to the subject matter of the course. The issues may have high or low volatility; however, they should have some researchable basis. That is, students will need access to material (books, journals, videotapes, magazines, newspapers) to assist them in their efforts.

Process

1. The instructor introduces several issues of controversy regarding the subject matter of the course. It may also be desirable to elicit additional issues of controversy from the class members.

2. The instructor arranges students into groups of four. Groups should be heterogeneous according to appropriate criteria (gender, age, race, experience, ability). Diversity is important.

3. In each group, two students (sub-group) study material favoring one viewpoint of the controversy (eg. capital gains tax, out-of-state garbage in land fills, collective bargaining for public employees, costs/benefits of an orbiting telescope) while the other two students study material favoring an opposing viewpoint. Some issues have several facets. Time will be required for planning, organization and research. As this is a relatively unstructured task, sub-groups will need to identify their objectives and plans. As part of the required performance, the instructor will have the students collaboratively prepare a list of their performance objectives and a brief outline of their plan for achieving the objectives. The instructor will need to evaluate the quality and specificity of the objectives and provide feedback to the students.

Alternatively, it may be desirable to examine some multiple perspectives issues where there are more than two (n) viewpoints. The instructor has to create groups of size 2n. Managing this modified RC approach may become quite complicated if more than three or four viewpoints are identified, per issue.

4. Each sub-group presents its findings (oral, written, etc.) to the other sub-group. Each sub-group wants to present its information in a compelling manner so as to influence others. A checklist on effective presentations can be provided to all the students. The instructor can observe the presentations and provide feedback to the presenters on the strengths and weaknesses of their attempts to influence. Using simple rating scales, students can provide feedback to each other on the perceived effectiveness of presentations.

5. The sub-groups switch roles; they are now to study material favoring the view they previously opposed and are to prepare a synthesis of their own.

6. Once the sub-groups have completed the assignment for step 5, all four members work together to reach consensus on the controversy and to prepare a report representing the team's views. Sometimes the group members cannot achieve consensus. In such instances it is appropriate to add a minority report or dissenting opinion to the group's report. This option may be suggested when a group informs the instructor that the group seems unable to reach consensus. Following the preparation of the report, the team members evaluate the contributions of each individual team member to the work of the team. Evaluations are anonymous and consist of making a rating of each person on the following three domains:

* The individual helped to keep the group focused and on track (task orientation);
* The individual helped by supplying useful information for task of the group (knowledge, expertise);
* The individual helped the group by being supportive and encouraging (facilitative, enabling orientation).

For each of these domains, the rater chooses one of these responses:

performance was unsatisfactory; example _____

performance was satisfactory

performance was excellent; example _____

The students will know in advance that they will be making the ratings. They submit the ratings on forms to the instructor who reviews them for completeness, screens them for unsavory remarks/pot shots, etc., and distributes them to the students. Hence, each individual receives additional feedback on his or her leader behavior.

7. If we assume that the faculty member grades the final report and, perhaps, other aspects of task achievement, it is most desirable to discuss with the students the elements of the grading and the grading criteria at the commencement of this entire process. The instructor can announce that the work will have to be graded for at least two dimensions: content and process. Then the instructor can invite students to "influence" the instructor and others regarding how grading might take place. A most useful resource for this effort is: Cross, K. Patricia, and Angelo, Thomas A. 1988. Classroom Assessment Techniques. University of Michigan, NCRIPTAL. Ann Arbor, Mi.

The process and suggestions presented here include refinements that have been gained from my own use of this approach. I have used this approach in college-level courses and in non-credit training courses. Student reactions, overall, have been positive. Although there is some hesitancy and some healthy skepticism at first, once students become engaged in the exploration of their topics, they perform with interest and enthusiasm.

Conclusion

Behaving as a leader usually requires direct interaction with others. Learning tasks need to be structured in ways that encourage and demand interaction. The skills to be learned must be clearly identified. There should be multiple opportunities for skill practice and evaluation.

The learning approach described here enables students to practice and learn skills that are identified as activities effective leaders do well. As college teachers, we can adopt approaches such as this to create many opportunities for our students to develop leadership skills within the context of our courses.

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